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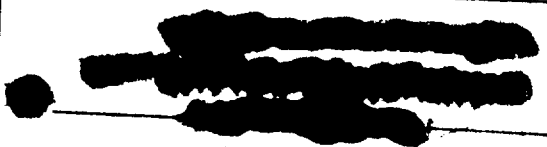
RELOCATION OF THE BIKINI MARSHALLESE

A STUDY IN GROUP MIGRATION

By

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A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty
of the Graduate School of Yale University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
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SUMMARY

In 1946 the American Administration removed the 159 inhabitants of Bikini Atoll to nearby and uninhabited Rongerik Atoll in order that atomic experimentation could be conducted on Bikini. Until then, Bikinian society had been well integrated on an authoritarian kin group basis, with a fishing and collecting economy that was well adapted to the limited resources. For two years they lived on the smaller atoll of Rongerik which finally proved inadequate for their continued habitation. During this time the population was altered by emigration of some of its number as contract laborers. In the economic crisis that eventuated the group was reorganized by its traditional leaders, who formed the Council, so that kin groups were subordinated to the community as a whole. After the isolation of Bikini and Rongerik the conservative Bikinians were settled for eight months on the air base at Kwajalein. There the younger generation was enlightened by its contacts with non-Bikinians. The entire group was permanently settled in 1948 on Kili Island in the southern Marshalls. In that different physical environment faced difficulties in adjusting their economic culture to the possibilities of Kili. The group was divided on the issue of adherence to Bikinian traditions of family organization. Younger people favored a more democratically organized society, and one that would participate more actively in trade with the Americans. By 1950 the Council reflected the essence of this situation. Its members represented inherited kin group authority but changes in social and economic organization had weakened their position. In the short space of four years Bikinians had experienced changes in custom that had taken four generations among other Marshallese.

necessity of arranging complicated international agreements about a matter that was of national military importance.

The announcement that Bikini Atoll had been selected for the experiment was made by a Navy official on January 24 in a Washington press release (HSB Jan. 24, 1946). At the same time, Admiral Blandy was mentioned as having been named commander for the tests which were to be known officially as "Operation Crossroads." Bikini Atoll met the requirements rather well: it was located in an American controlled area; it was subject to steady tradewinds from November to July; a great expanse of ocean to the southwest was uninterrupted by islands; the atoll was outside the usual typhoon area; its lagoon was large enough to hold a sizeable fleet and shallow enough to permit underwater survey of damaged ships; it was outside the commercial lanes of transpacific travel and only 215 miles north of the naval air base at Kwajalein. Finally, there was a population of only 167 natives to be moved elsewhere.

At Bikini Atoll, the first manifestation of the superlative atomic undertaking was the arrival during the early part of February of the Hydrographic Survey ship, U. S. S. Sumner (HA May 13, 1946). Officers and crew of the Sumner had instructions to sound the lagoon and chart shoal areas, to construct navigational aids, and to blast clear of coral an anchorage 9 miles square and 45 feet deep, in order to accommodate a fleet of 97 ships which were already being assembled on the West Coast to serve as "guinea pigs" in the tests. The Sumner was allotted 60 days to accomplish a job that the Hydrographic Office estimated would take four months (HSB Mar. 1; HA May 13, 1946). This

was indicative of the pressure being applied from higher administrative levels to get the experiment underway. The Bikinians, as yet unaware during that first week in February of the portent of the Summer's activity, watched curiously from shore and raced in their outrigger canoes to collect fish that had been stunned or killed by the dynamite charges in removing coral obstructions from the lagoon (HSB Mar. 1, 1946).

Selection of a Site for Relocation

The writer has described the Marshallese line of authority observed by Bikinians, from their own lineage headmen to local chief, and from chief to an appointed administrator at Ewajalein who was directly responsible to Jeimata, the paramount chief of northern Ralik. In the events that followed upon Washington's decision to experiment at Bikini, the Marshallese found themselves dealing with a comparable chain of command within the United States Navy. From the initial occupation of the Marshalls by American forces in 1944 until the former Japanese mandated islands became a United Nations' trusteeship in 1947, all matters relating to the Marshallese were handled by Military Government. In order to appreciate the relative degree of authority and the roles of individual naval officers in the following account, it is necessary to review briefly the hierarchy of authority in Military Government in 1946 (U. S. N. Trust Territory Handbk. 1948:95-97).

All of the Marianas, Carolines, and Marshalls in 1946 were combined under the military control of the Commander Marianas (ComMar),

who was stationed at Guam. The same officer also had charge of civil affairs throughout the area. He was responsible on both counts directly to the Commander-in-Chief U. S. Pacific Fleet (Cincpac), whose headquarters were at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and who answered to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) in Washington, D. C. The inhabitants of the Marshall Islands came under the authority of the Deputy Military Governor of the Marshall Islands who was also Atoll Commander (in military matters) at Kwajalein; he reported to Commander Marianas. The Deputy Military Governor was assisted in Marshallese affairs by a Military Government Unit, headed by the Senior Military Government Officer who had a small staff to aid him.

On the tenth day of February in 1946, the Deputy Military Governor of the Marshall Islands, with orders from a higher authority to remove the inhabitants from Bikini, traveled by amphibious plane to that atoll with some of his staff in order to discuss the problem with the islanders. Standing before the assembled community, Commodore Ben H. Wyatt, U. S. N., a Kentuckian with an impressive military record, told the Bikini people the story of the A-bomb. A Marshallese assistant interpreted his words to the Bikinians, who could understand scarcely a word of the officer's speech in English. As they sat there, cross-legged on the coral strewn ground under the coconut palms, they learned of the action taken in Washington to conduct an atomic experiment at Bikini. They were told what probably would happen to their islands as a consequence. The Commodore asked them if they were willing to leave Bikini and settle on another atoll in the Marshall Islands.

As Wyatt later told newsmen at Kwajalein, "That was a tough job . . . , if one man in that crowd said, 'I will not leave,' it meant trouble and bad feelings. I told the story as simply as I could, and made no commitments" (HSS Feb. 23, 1946). The Bikinians discussed the matter among themselves, a subject which they could scarcely have comprehended in all of its ramifications. That which conceivably they did understand was a request by the United States, whose Navy and Army had delivered them from hunger and hardship during the war, to yield up their home land for tests which were exceedingly important.

According to Wyatt's description to newsmen, Juda, the iroij (chief) of Bikini, finally rose from his seat on the ground and answered, "If the United States government and the scientists of the world want to use our island and atoll for furthering development, which with God's blessing will result in kindness and benefit to all mankind, my people will be pleased to go elsewhere." In other words, the Bikinians were truly grateful and stood ready to show their appreciation in any way suggested by the United States government. Reportedly there was no dissenting voice, and that was very probably true. The Commodore and his staff returned to headquarters at Kwajalein on the same day.

It is not clear whether Bikinians at that time discussed with the Military Governor the problem of where to resettle, or whether this was done at a later date after they had taken time to ponder the matter. The official report of the relocation simply notes that when a vote was taken, 9 of the 11 alab of Bikini namedongerik Atoll as their first choice (Leade 1946). At any rate, final selection of a

site for relocation was postponed by Military Government until several alternative possibilities could be explored.

Three atolls in northern Malik were considered--Rongerik, Ujae, and Lae. From a physical point of view (the naval authorities seem to have been more concerned with this aspect) the best site was Rongerik. Though smaller than Bikini, Rongerik was uninhabited (see Table XXXIV for areas and populations of atolls involved). Upon closer inspection, Rongerik was judged to have a good topsoil and a heavy vegetative cover, including the usual food trees and arrowroot. Its beaching facilities and relative lack of navigational hazards won favor with those who were responsible for the logistics of resettlement. On the debit side, the quality of the coconuts was not impressive. Rongerik Island, the largest in the atoll, could produce only a modest amount of copra at best, with no other possibilities on the smaller islands. Furthermore, the wide expanse of reef beyond the outer shore of Rongerik Island was regarded as a potential health hazard in the disposal of refuse and waste. At Ujae Atoll, inspection both from the air and on the shore revealed a number of serious navigational and beaching difficulties. Lae Atoll was regarded as too small and with too few resources to support an additional population for very long (Meade 1946).

Jeinata was called upon to give counsel to Military Government officials, owing to his claims to ownership of Bikini Atoll. He strongly urged that his subjects be resettled on either Ujae or Lae, and offered the exclusive use of two small islands on the former atoll. In his opinion the entire population of Ujae could easily subsist on

TABLE XXXIV

COMPARISON OF BIKINI WITH PROPOSED RELOCATION SITES

<u>Atoll</u>	<u>Total Land</u> <u>(sq. miles)</u>	<u>Habitable Land</u> ¹ <u>(sq. miles)</u>	<u>Main Island</u> <u>(sq. miles)</u>	<u>Lagoon Area</u> <u>(sq. miles)</u>	<u>Population</u> <u>(1946)</u>
Bikini	2.32	1.50	0.66	229.40	167
Rongerik	0.65	0.33	0.17	55.38	---
Ujae	0.72	0.36	0.19	71.79	122
Lae	0.56	0.23	0.23	6.82	103

¹ Includes only those islands with an area of 0.16 sq. mile or more.

the resources of the main island where their primary settlement was located. It is easy to understand why Jeimata advised against relocating the Bikinians on Rongerik Atoll, because Rongerik was the only atoll in northern Ralik that did not come under his authority. It belonged to Lajore, another paramount chief in Ralik, who held rights to a number of islands independently through inheritance from an ancestor of the time of Kabua before Kabua's empire was divided between his sons (Yason 1947:98).

In reviewing Bikinian reactions to the proposed sites, it is essential first to examine the possibility that most of the principals regarded the relocation as only temporary. This is significant since attitudes that rested on the assumption of short-term occupation would not be the same as opinions about a given site for permanent settlement. The evidence is contradictory concerning the proposal received by Bikinians on February 10. Perhaps the Commodore did not suggest a possible return to Bikini (it has been noted that he made no "commitments"), but who can say at this late date what impression was carried in the Commodore's words as translated by his Marshallese

live on the islands of Bikini for perhaps as long as a year and be exposed to no more radiation than one would receive in a "single chest X-ray." However, he added, the islands were several miles from the center of the target area, and the lagoon bottom was still very radioactive due to the effects of the underwater explosion in 1946. Although marine fauna and flora appeared to be prospering, their radioactivity would present a danger to humans who attempted to subsist on the resources of the lagoon (HSB Sept. 12, 1947). This answered one question raised by the Board of Investigation, about the possibility of repatriation of Bikinians to their ancestral atoll. They could not be returned in the foreseeable future, and probably never.

Until the end of September 1947, the Bikinians' welfare remained primarily a problem for naval authorities to explore without non-naval interference. However, with the appointment of a civilian to the Board of Investigation, a door had been opened for intra-governmental politics. The civilian participation in this case was the study conducted for the Board by Dr. MacMillan of the U. S. Commercial Company, which although responsible to the Navy for the economic welfare of Micronesians continued to be a civilian agency. Dr. MacMillan's report on the Rongerik situation had been submitted to Commodore Seitz on August 19. Although it was later incorporated into the findings and recommendations of the Board, it must be assumed on the basis of subsequent developments that the MacMillan Report was forwarded independently through channels both military and civilian to top level offices in Washington.

Through military channels, the report reached the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington on September 23 with comment by the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, "It is indicated that economic conditions on Rongerik are so serious as to demand an early settlement of the former Bikini inhabitants on a more fertile island" (ESB Oct. 4, 1947). By another route, and surely not a military one, the MacMillan Report was received by former Secretary of the Interior Ickes, a long time critic of the Navy Department and mentioned earlier as having used MacMillan's material for ammunition in a strongly worded criticism of the Navy in his column "Man to Man" (ESB Sept. 29, 1947). While Ickes did not name MacMillan as author of the report, direct quotations from it left no doubt as to its identity. Ickes' comments revolved about the question of minority group rights, and his charges of neglect were aimed at Rear Admiral Wright and Admiral Denfeld, Deputy and High Commissioner of the Trust Territory respectively. The columnist implied that experimental animals who survived the atomic blasts at Bikini had received more consideration than Bikinians, who had been persuaded by the Navy to move to Rongerik Atoll "as their contribution to the advancement of science."

Although the Star Bulletin carried Ickes' column in its Monday evening edition, it was a rival Honolulu paper, in its Thursday morning edition, that used the topic as a news item. An Advertiser staff reporter interviewed Navy officials at Pearl Harbor who by then had released the MacMillan Report. A Navy spokesman was quoted as denying the charges made by Ickes, and indicating that Ujelang Atoll was the unanimous choice of Bikinians and the Navy after an exhaustive

study of alternative sites (HA Oct. 2, 1947). That evening the Star Bulletin continued the story with a more extensive report of the same material, plus an account of an interview with Admiral Denfeld. The latter informed the press that he had first "learned of the natives' plight soon after I took over office last February," and that he had then ordered something to be done immediately. He referred to the work of the Board and acknowledged MacMillan's assistance, explaining that the islanders' removal from Rongerik had been delayed only while community leaders inspected possible sites for resettlement. However, no definite plan was announced for the evacuation of Bikinians to Ujelang (HSB Oct. 2, 1947).

On that same day Commodore Seitz arrived in Hawaii, having been flown from Kwajalein for emergency treatment of an illness at Aiea Navy Hospital. He reported that the findings and recommendations of the Board had been forwarded the previous week to Admiral Wright, and that Kwajalein officials were only waiting for the Deputy High Commissioner's decision in the matter. In Seitz' opinion it would take about two months to move the Bikinians to Ujelang. He outlined a plan by which the resettlement could be accomplished. He blamed the Bikinians' failure to adjust to Rongerik on the inadequacy of resources at Rongerik, and the islanders' homesickness for Bikini, which had tended to create among them an "apathetic condition" (HSB Oct. 3, 1947).

On the mainland the New York Times chided the Navy for its neglect of Bikinians in an editorial that read, "Bikini people deserve a lot more than they have been given by the richest country in the

world. The debt can never be fully paid. Perhaps the current publicity will make Navy officials more conscious of their responsibility" (Oct. 3, 1947). In Washington the chief of Naval Operations declined to comment on the matter, deferring to Admiral Denfeld as High Commissioner (HSB Oct. 4, 1947). The Star Bulletin, which of the two Honolulu papers tended to be more critical of the Navy, published a two-column editorial in its week end edition, entitled "Rongerik--a Symbol of Neglect." After lengthy quotations from the MacMillan Report, the editor charged, "We could spend tens of millions for the Bikini experiment But we couldn't spend the tiny time and the trivial money to see that 160 natives, . . . were properly cared for where we ordered them to go. We were more interested in promoting death than in sustaining life . . ." (Oct. 4, 1947).

Admiral Wright, who had been under fire the most in the press exchange with the Navy, issued a public statement through the High Commissioner only a week after Ickes had presented MacMillan's conclusions to the public. Wright admitted that the charges by Ickes had been "approximately correct" with a few exceptions: (1) Bikinians, and not the Navy, had chosen Rongerik in 1946, (2) no natives were "starving" to death on Rongerik, in fact there had been 7 births and only one death since the move from Bikini, and (3) Bikinians had not been "forgotten" but on the contrary had been visited frequently and supplied with provisions. He pointed out that the group had changed its mind several times about a place to move to, but that the Navy was prepared to relocate the people on Ujelang whenever they decided

to live there (HSB Oct. 7, 1947). Two days later Admiral Denfeld, guest speaker at a public dinner meeting, added, "You can be assured that . . . those natives are going where they want to go and will be taken care of. We have displaced them, of necessity, and now we're going to see that they get a square deal" (EA Oct. 9, 1947). The Star Bulletin quoted further from his speech, "We have hesitated to force the natives to go to Ujelang. . . . The Navy finds Ujelang a very suitable place. It is the policy of the Navy to give the natives what they want. We have refrained from ruling them with an iron hand . . . in spite of the fact that it would be best for them in the case of Ujelang" (Oct. 9, 1947).

Admiral Wright summarized his own philosophy of administration even before he became an official in the Trust Territory government, in an article entitled, "Let's Not Civilize These Happy People" (1947). As the Navy's General Inspector of the Pacific Ocean Area, he had visited nearly every important native community in the former Japanese mandated islands. On the basis of that experience he writes, "Whatever external influence is brought to bear on the islanders will almost certainly be predominantly American. That influence can either be one of mild benevolence, . . . to the establishment of which I am dedicated, or it can be anything else from the fatuous to the despotic. . . . I believe, it is our duty to protect the islanders from the evils we have been too prone to visit upon indigenous peoples in our past, . . . [subjected] to the iron whim and idiosyncrasy of the casually appointed military governor, the pork-barrel bureaucrat or the grinning do-gooder for a salary" (p. 150).

During the week of October 12, Juda and at least two alab were again taken from Rongerik to survey the resources of Ujelang Atoll in a final attempt to persuade the islanders to commit themselves to that choice (HA Oct. 16; HSB Oct. 18, 1947). On October 16, Commander Miller and his Executive Officer, Lieutenant Watson, accompanied by a Star Bulletin photographer, flew from Kwajalein to Rongerik to discuss the projected move to Ujelang. The photographer returned to Honolulu with pictures and a story which tended to confirm the observations earlier made by MacMillan. Although the newsman discovered no evidence of a continuing Navy supply of food to Rongerik, as claimed, he did note that the Navy was doing everything possible to "rectify" the troubles of the natives by settling them on another, better atoll (HSB Oct. 18, 22, and 24, 1947). A Navy spokesman at Pearl Harbor announced on October 17 that Bikinians were to be moved to Ujelang in the near future and that six weeks would be required to accomplish the resettlement (HSB Oct. 17, 1947).

Supplies had to be requisitioned from Guam and Pearl Harbor for construction work at Ujelang, and several weeks passed before further word was received from the Marshalls on progress of the operation. Earlier, Commodore Seitz had outlined the procedure to be followed in the transfer, which in general would be patterned after the Bikini evacuation: (1) a group of a dozen young workers from the Marshallese Labor Camp at Kwajalein would be sent with a Navy working party to clear the village area on Ujelang Island, and to construct water catchment basins for storage of rain water, (2) about half of the Bikinians, their housing, and their personal belongings, would then

be moved in an LST to the cleared site and established there, and (3) the final phase of the operation would bring the rest of the community to Ujelang (HSB Oct. 3, 1947). On October 24 in Hawaii, Commodore Seitz died, having failed to recover from a severe attack of pneumonia (HSB Oct. 25, 1947). A temporary replacement was named to serve out the rest of the year until a more permanent appointment could be made to the top administrative post in the Marshall Islands (HA Nov. 1, 1947).

During November the affairs of Bikinians became somewhat entangled with changes in naval personnel, and progress was achieved largely across conference tables at higher levels of administration. Commander Miller met at Guam with Rear Admiral Wright, then Acting High Commissioner; later, Miller conferred in Hawaii with Vice Admiral H. B. Sallada, U. S. N., Acting Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet, in the temporary absence of Admiral Denfeld who was in Washington. The overlapping of civil and military functions was well demonstrated at that time by the need to confer with officials representing each function, although the matter was primarily one of Civil Administration responsibility. Miller, upon his departure from Hawaii for the Marshalls, informed the press that the Bikinian community would definitely be moved to Ujelang in early December, and that their resettlement had "top priority" (HA Nov. 8, 1947). Shortly after his return to Kwajalein, Commander Miller was replaced by Commander E. R. Nelson, U. S. N., who was to retain the post of Civil Administrator for only two months before being assigned to another district in the Trust Territory (Kwajalein Civ. Adm. Report, 4th quarter, 1947). Miller remained in the Marshalls at least

through November in order to assist in the activation of the Ujelang project.

Actual work on the project began November 22, when Lieutenant Watson who had served on the Board of Investigation and was now in charge of the resettlement arrived at Ujelang with a working party of 20 Seabees and 10 Marshallese laborers most of whom were Bikinians. Materials for the new village were brought from Kwajalein in two naval vessels, and a third ship anchored in the lagoon to serve as living quarters for the construction party. It is not necessary to go into further detail about the preparation of Ujelang, since the Bikinians were destined never to make their permanent residence there.

The Atomic Energy Commission publicly announced on December 1 that the Marshallese atoll of Eniwetok was to be the site for a second series of atomic weapon experiments. Apparently the decision to undertake further tests in the Pacific had been made as early as July, but the identity of the site had remained secret. It was also disclosed that construction had been started at the new proving ground by the combined armed forces. The 145 Marshallese occupants of Eniwetok Atoll would be relocated, just as the Bikinians had been. However, according to the Commission, ". . . the site for the new home of the Eniwetok inhabitants will be selected by them. [They] will be reimbursed for lands utilized and will be given every assistance and care" (HA Dec. 2, 1947). On December 3 the Governor and the Civil Administrator of the Marshalls flew to Eniwetok to inform the islanders of the need for their relocation elsewhere

(Kwajalein Civ. Adm. Report, 4th quarter, 1947). On the following day, Rear Admiral Wright announced from Guam that "the Eniwetok natives would be moved to Ujelang instead of the Rongerik natives, as had previously been planned" (HA Dec. 5, 1947). Work continued at Ujelang during December, and on the 21st the entire Eniwetok community and all their belongings were transported to the new location. Their adjustment on that atoll is another story.

Bikinians spent the month of December adjusting to the decision that Ujelang, which they had finally accepted as an alternative to continued residence at Rongerik, was being occupied by another group of displaced Marshallese. Food resources at Rongerik declined alarmingly. The community suffered both physically and mentally. A trading ship entered the lagoon one day toward the end of the month, and Bikinians exchanged about \$350 worth of handicraft for an approximately equal amount of food stores. They were already in debt to the U. S. Commercial Company, and could not afford to buy more (Kwajalein Civ. Adm. Report, 4th quarter, 1947).

The Bikinian problem no longer had top priority at Kwajalein amidst the atmosphere of urgency that surrounded preparations for atomic tests scheduled to begin in February 1948. A new Governor of the Marshalls took over from his temporary predecessor at Kwajalein in early December. He was Captain John P. W. Vest, U. S. N., recently in command of the U. S. S. Franklin D. Roosevelt, one of the three largest aircraft carriers in the Navy at the time (HA Nov. 2, 1947). At a higher level of officialdom, Admiral Denfeld had been named to the post of Chief of Naval Operations and departed for Washington on

December 3, leaving Vice Admiral Sallada in command of military matters but continuing to exercise his authority as High Commissioner of the Trust Territory (HA Nov. 25, 1947). A press release from Washington the day after the New Year was ushered in stated, "The Navy has no present plans for moving the Bikinians from Rongerik, and indicated that the fault lies with the Bikinians for their indecision" to leave Rongerik (HSB Jan. 2, 1948).

Crisis--and Relief

The next phase of Bikinian history was initiated in Hawaii. On January 12, 1948, Admiral DeWitt C. Ramsey, U. S. N., in an appropriate ceremony at Pearl Harbor relieved Vice Admiral Sallada as commander of United States armed forces in the Pacific. He did not, however, at the same time become High Commissioner of the Trust Territory, because the initial appointment by the President had named Admiral Denfeld as an individual and not as Commander-in-Chief Pacific (HA Jan. 13, 1948). It was only on April 17, 1948, that Admiral Ramsey succeeded Denfeld as High Commissioner (U. S. N. Trust Territory Handbk. 1948:99). Nevertheless, some responsibility for civil affairs in the Trust Territory was at once assumed by Admiral Ramsey. In the Bikinian affair, it was not long before he called upon two Honolulu civilians who had experience in the trust area with Pacific Island peoples. They were Dr. Peter Buck, Director of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, and the writer, from the University of Hawaii. As the result of conferences at Pearl Harbor, the writer was requested to investigate the situation at Rongerik as soon as possible.

Several questions had been raised at various administrative levels which required answers before the Bikinian problem could be satisfactorily dealt with. These questions have been summarized in the writer's report on resettlement of the Bikinian group (1950:9).

(1) How unanimous are Bikinians in their desire to leave Rongerik?

(2) Are Bikinians willing to work toward rehabilitation of Rongerik's resources if such a program should prove feasible?

(3) Do they have confidence in their own leaders, their iroij and alab?

(4) What is the quality of leadership with relation to the Rongerik emergency?

(5) What are their attitudes, individually and collectively, about relocating at Kili Island where there is no lagoon? At either Ujae or Motho Atoll both of which are already populated? At any other place in the Marshalls where Bikinians might possibly be accommodated?

The writer traveled to Kwajalein by naval air transport, departing from Honolulu on January 24. At Kwajalein, he was given every assistance by Captain Vest, Governor of the Marshalls, and by Commander E. F. Ferguson, U. S. N., who had just relieved Commander Nelson as Civil Administrator. Storm conditions made it impossible to land on the lagoon at Rongerik until January 31. During the interim, the writer fortunately was able to interview some 15 Bikinians who were then living in the Marshallese labor camp, most of whom were employed by the Navy on the air base. Further information about the Rongerik situation was gained from American officials with firsthand knowledge, including Lieutenant (junior

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grade) William A. Conover, U. S. N., medical officer, and Mr. John Spivey, Kwajalein representative of Island Trading Company, the Navy-sponsored organization which had replaced U. S. Commercial Company on January 1, 1948, as the only non-native economic agency in the Trust Territory (HA Dec. 7, 1947). James Milne, a Marshallese mixed blood from Ebon Atoll and employed as interpreter at Kwajalein (a man already known to the writer from their visit to Rongerik on May 11, 1946), was loaned to the writer as interpreter for the field work at Rongerik. Food stores and field equipment were readily supplied by the Navy at Kwajalein.

When the writer and Milne had been landed on Rongerik Island, the purpose of the investigation was carefully explained to Juda and the villagers who assembled in the town hall. Two primary questions were posed, on which the writer wished to gain information by means of interviews with individuals and small groups: (1) could Rongerik in any way be made suitable for continued settlement by Bikinians, and (2) if not, what other location could be agreed upon? As may be seen, nothing new was being asked, but for the first time a more prolonged survey of actual living conditions and community organization was being undertaken, as well as a canvass of individual opinion about Rongerik and other sites.

The critical condition of the people was first realized by the writer on the morning of the next day, a Sunday. The only food in the village was a 100-pound sack of flour from the store. This flour was mixed with water in two communal kitchens, one for men and one for women, and served to 167 persons each of whom received about

half a canteen cupful. Further prospects for food that day were not apparent. From extra stores which the writer had brought from Kwajalein for exchange purposes, flour, sugar, and salt for a flour dumpling soup was contributed to the community's second and final meal of the day. While Bikinians, seated on mats beneath the coconut palms near the town hall, shared these limited rations that evening, Lokwiar, the retired iroij of Bikini, delivered a remarkable speech which was directed primarily at the writer as he sat among the islanders. Lokwiar pointed out the dire want of his people and their lack of resources on Rongerik. In the Bible, he said, the people of old were in trouble, and the Lord had sent His Son from Heaven to live on earth and to aid the people. Now, he added, the inhabitants of Rongerik were in trouble and the United States government had sent a representative to live among them and to determine their need and bring them help. Although the writer was disconcerted by the implications of the comparison, it is significant that Lokwiar's presentation of the problem was cast in Biblical terms, and that Bikinians indeed felt deeply about their present condition.

At the Council meeting convened Monday morning, February 2, the writer was told that when food had become scarce on Rongerik, the community was reorganized in its production and distribution activities in such a way that the community rather than the Cooking Group and the lineage was now paramount. The pastor Jojaia had opened the meeting formally with a prayer that the "Government" (as the Council was called) receive divine guidance in the selection of men for working parties. Then Juda, reading from a prepared list of

names, assigned work groups for that day. One group of 11 men would fish, employing the two canoes that were still seaworthy. Some of the men would go to the far end of the lagoon where fish were reported to be more plentiful, and try their luck with a drop-line technique, baiting their hooks with bits of hermit crab meat. Others would fish in the shallow waters off a nearby island by using a net and palm-leaf surround technique. The second group of 9 men would plant coconuts and pandanus in suitable areas near the village. It was regular practice for each man to plant 5 coconut seedlings and 5 pandanus cuttings in order to increase the long term resources of the island. The third assignment involved only 2 men who would bait flytraps within the village area, and use Navy sprayguns and insecticide in the latrines. The fourth group included all women, who would make handicraft to provide some money income for purchase of food supplies when the trader next visited the island. The medical practitioner, recently returned from a training course at the Kwajalein Navy dispensary, was directed to attend anyone who might be ill that day. Immediately following the Council meeting, the building would be used for school for 20 to 30 children that were taught by a young woman of Ujae, married to a Bikinian and trained by the Americans.

The Council then proceeded to divide into 4 equal parts a solid block of arrowroot starch about 12 inches in diameter, which had been brought back the evening before by several men who had harvested and processed the arrowroot crop on Enyvertok Island at the southeast corner of the atoll. Each share was distributed to the head of one of the 4 sections of the village which maintained separate cooking

places. When the arrowroot was mixed with water and cooked, it was not sufficient for everyone so that only children and old people benefited. Others waited patiently for the fishermen to return that afternoon.

The total catch for the day amounted to only 128 fish (weo, marreāt, mājakot, and utot, which were not further identified by the writer). About 120 of these were of utot, a small fish about 6 inches long, caught in the shallows, and slightly poisonous if eaten. The other fish were larger and had been taken with hook and line. As in the case of the arrowroot, the fishes were divided into 4 equal piles on the beach, each of which was later carried away by a representative of a cooking section. In each section the division was continued and each fish was cut into small pieces and passed out to individual families to be roasted on hot coals and the bones sucked clean. Entrails of the larger fishes were thrown to the only dog on the island. When some of the islanders were queried about the advisability of eating poisonous utot, they replied that since no great amount was eaten by any one person the effects could not be serious. Anyway, they added, what else was there to eat? Although the writer had not come prepared to feed the village for a week from his personal stores, 4 large cans of corned beef and 8 small ones of evaporated milk were presented to the Council for distribution.

The effects of eating the utot were apparent next morning, for the village seemed unusually quiet. When the Council met to plan the day's work, absences were explained by the medical practitioner as due to a numbness of arms and legs and a looseness of the bowels.

The Council decided to take a rather drastic step and authorized the collection of young coconuts and pandanus for children and elders, since no other source of food was anticipated that day. Once more, the writer dug into his small food supply in order to make it unnecessary to exploit the immature fruit of the impoverished island. He contributed 8 small cans of beef and vegetable stew, which were mixed with large quantities of water and spiced with salt and pepper. Two cans went to each of the 4 cooking sections. In one section, food was shared by 25 children and old people, and by 16 individuals of similar age groups in another.

Meanwhile the writer conducted interviews by household, questioning individuals in groups of 4 or 5 about the existing state of their food resources. It soon became apparent that the previous week or ten days, when the weather had been so bad that one could not fish even in the lagoon, was the most critical in the history of the Rongerik settlement. Divers working off the reef of the main island were able to secure 30 to 40 clams (mejonwor) which were shared by members of the community. Children and old people had to depend almost entirely on the milk and soft meat of young coconuts, some of them consuming even the softer parts of the shells. Meager quantities of coconut toddy (jekaru) were obtained for smaller children by tapping the inflorescences of a few trees. Babies nursed at the breast when their mothers could satisfy them. The only other food that had been available that week for 167 persons was flour, drawn from the rapidly diminishing store inventory. There was enough flour, when mixed with water, to produce a half canteen cupful of thin gruel each day for

each individual.

The organization with which Bikinians met this crisis was founded on the community as the primary social unit, controlled by the Council, or "Government." Work parties were named each day without reference to lineages, subclans, or extended family groupings. Distribution of the material results of this communal effort was made on the basis of 4 sections of the village under the leadership of 4 alab; sometimes, however, only 2 cooking sections were organized, one for males and the other for females. Neither land nor trees at Rongerik had been assigned to lineages, as was the custom on Bikini. Collection of coconuts and pandanus from trees that grew in the immediate vicinity of dwelling units had first to be approved by the "Government." Fresh water was rationed in anticipation of the long dry spell that lay ahead. Six of the 9 cisterns which the Navy had built in 1946 were completely empty. The other 3 held a little over 3,000 gallons of rain water, estimated to last through February although no rain was expected until after March. Each household was permitted to use one bucket of fresh water each day.

Island Trading Company delivered an order of trade goods to the storekeeper on Rongerik on January 10, 1948. These supplies consisted of 1,000 pounds of rice, 800 pounds of flour, 200 pounds of sugar, and miscellaneous amounts of biscuit, tinned meat, and evaporated milk. The trader considered this amount sufficient to last the Bikinians for 6 weeks, or until the next regular trading trip. The Council on its own initiative declared a daily ration for the community of one 100-pound sack of either rice or flour until the

supply was exhausted. The mechanics of distribution are instructive. The first day's ration was one sack of rice which was sold by the storekeeper to the "Government" at the regular price of \$15.00. He was paid by individual contributions of 10 cents as required by the "Government." Under Juda's supervision the rice was divided into two lots, which were cooked in the kitchens for men and women. Although rice and flour were distributed on a community basis, other foods were purchased independently by each of the 4 sections, with money that had been earned by female members from the sale of handicraft. By strict adherence to this system of rationing, food stores were conserved until the end of January, but the last portion was consumed on the day after the writer's arrival as already has been described. During January very little other food was available from local sources, and residents were almost entirely dependent on purchases from the storekeeper. For this reason, a trade order that would have sufficed for 6 weeks in any normal Marshallese community of comparable size, lasted only 3 weeks on Rongerik. It should be noted that Marshallese consider one pound of rice per adult as a proper daily ration in addition to the usual local foods (Kason 1947:76). Before the war, Japanese who employed Marshallese labor were in the habit of providing a daily ration that included one and a half pounds of rice (p. 195). It is therefore evident that Bikinians were not squandering their food supply, although the per capita consumption of rice may seem somewhat exorbitant by American standards.

As mentioned earlier, the only money earned by the people at Rongerik was from the sale of handicraft, except as supplemented to

a minor degree by nominal salaries paid to village officials by Civil Administration. Although some Bikinians were employed at Kwajalein, actually very little of their earnings was available to the Rongerik community. While the writer does not have complete data on handicraft sales and purchase of supplies from March 1946, to January 1948, it was estimated by Island Trading Company at Kwajalein that Bikinians during that period had received trade goods in the amount of \$6,000, less than \$300 per month for the whole community. Such imports included not only food, but also matches, kerosene, fishing equipment, cloth, sewing materials, and cigarettes. However, toward the end of 1947, food purchases mounted steadily in proportion to other goods, reflecting the increasing scarcity of locally available food. According to invoices held by the Rongerik storekeeper for the last quarter of 1947, food imports accounted for 92 per cent of total supplies ordered.

However, the money income did not keep pace with expenditures, and Bikinians became increasingly indebted to the U. S. Commercial Company. According to an audit by Island Trading Company after it succeeded the older agency, the Rongerik debt in January 1948 amounted to \$641.16. On January 30, Mr. Spivey, Kwajalein representative of Island Trading Company, was notified by his superiors at Guam that new company policy could not permit the further extension of credit to Micronesians. Arrangements were made immediately by Civil Administration at Kwajalein to assume the indebtedness of Bikinians at Rongerik until some solution to their problem could be achieved.

The writer judged the people at Rongerik to be relatively well

supplied in regard to clothing and housing, but most of their outrigger canoes had deteriorated to the point of unseaworthiness. Of the 8 sailing canoes brought from Bikini only 4 were in any shape to be used, and 3 of these had to be repaired constantly. Sailcloth was torn and required replacement, rope was needed for the heavier rigging, and coconut sennit lashings on the outrigger framework were in very poor condition. The husk of Rongerik coconuts had proved unsatisfactory for making sennit, and the islanders' supply from Bikini had long since been used up.

After two or three days of investigation, the writer had collected enough information to provide a conclusive answer to the first of his questions, i.e., could Rongerik in any way continue to support the displaced community? The answer was well summarized in the words of one Bikinian, "Rongerik is really all right, but there isn't any food here." The islands were obviously depleted in food resources, and rehabilitation by means of a sustained agricultural program could not be expected to produce results for 8 or 10 years. The islanders expressed themselves, both individually and as a group, as ready to leave Rongerik the next day if presented with the opportunity.

During the remainder of the week, while the writer turned his attention more directly to community opinion about alternative sites for relocation, a series of incidents occurred which brought the islanders unexpected relief from their food anxieties. About noon on Tuesday, February 3, Lieutenant Watson arrived on schedule by seaplane from Kwajalein in order to join the writer in the Rongerik

investigation. He was quickly apprised of the seriousness of the Rongerik situation, and a message was drafted for Captain Vest at Kwajalein, urging immediate food relief and medical attention. While the plane commander carried the message back to Headquarters, the writer briefed Watson further on local conditions by introducing him to individuals and families who described their experiences on Rongerik. Some of the poisonous utot were brought in by fishermen that day, but the villagers were persuaded to use the fish instead for baiting flytraps, and were provided with some rice and canned fruit from the writer's supply.

At dawn the next morning, the roar of engines overhead startled the waking islanders as the plane from Kwajalein returned, bringing the Civil Administrator, his medical officer, and a Marshallese nurse, together with a full day's ration of food for the entire village, including fresh oranges, rice, canned fruit and salmon, and evaporated milk. The Governor could not have acted sooner in response to Watson's message of urgency. He had also ordered an additional 6 day's rations to be placed aboard a naval vessel that was just leaving Kwajalein for Rongerik on an independent military mission. Furthermore, Commander Ferguson indicated, the community had been placed in an emergency category pending final decision about resettlement. A trading ship was scheduled to visit Rongerik within a week with a month's supply of food stores, all of which was paid for by Civil Administration.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Conover, the Navy doctor, had briefly examined the Bikinians and reported their condition generally to be

that of a starving people. He prescribed vitamin tablets and evaporated milk, and gave instructions to the local medical practitioner for their proper administration. While the natives ate their first full meal in several weeks, their mood changed. Whenever they could attract the attention of an American, they patted their stomachs and smiled with obvious satisfaction. Commander Ferguson and his party returned to Kwajalein in the afternoon. That evening the naval vessel with emergency supplies dropped anchor in the lagoon, and unloading was started early the next morning.

The writer by this time had isolated a number of factors that seemed to militate against a firm community decision on the subject of resettlement. The reasoning behind the Council's decision of August 26 to remain on Rongerik despite its disadvantages, was based on the conviction that because the Navy had already spent much time and money in moving the community to Rongerik, the migrants should cause the Navy no further inconvenience. They were willing to endure the hardships associated with Rongerik rather than incur the imagined displeasure of Civil Administration if they voted to move again. Once this fear had been dispelled by the writer's assurance that the Administration had in mind only their best interests, they were quite ready to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of three sites that had been proposed--Kili, Ujae, and Wotho.

The islanders tended to dismiss Wotho Atoll immediately as being too small to support two populations indefinitely. Several informants believed that resettlement on Wotho would necessitate another move in future years. Arguments for and against Ujae and

Kili proved to be somewhat stereotyped, were based on reports by the few Bikinians who had direct knowledge of either place, and reflected their prejudices. Those who were in favor of Ujae Atoll stressed the existence of a lagoon and the exclusive use of two islands which had been promised to the migrants. They commented on the abundance of food plants and marine life, and one person revived an old Marshallese tradition that coconuts were never lacking on Ujae. Those who disapproved of Ujae contended that although there was sufficient food for the two groups for the present, within one generation the combined population could not be supported. The writer's suggestion that Bikinians might be divided between Ujae and Wotho brought emphatic denials that any plan involving a division of the community could ever be successful. The final, weighty objection to Ujae was concerned with the present occupation of the atoll by other Marshallese.

Similarly, opinions about Kili Island were typed, and little variation was encountered after 4 or 5 households had been interviewed. Advocates of Kili recalled the larger size of coconuts and other fruits, and the greater variety of food plants that flourished in the rich soil and the damp climate. Excellent tuna fishing was reported to exist offshore. While everyone agreed on these points, the disputed issue was the reef and the lack of a lagoon. On the adverse side, comments were received by the writer that "the reef is bad, dangerous, especially when the sea is rough, at which time there are only two places where canoes can be landed." Others countered with statements that "the reef doesn't really matter, we are not afraid of the reef, it can be managed in canoes; Kili is no worse than Mejit Island or

Namorik where the reef is difficult to cross; one can land anywhere at Kili when the sea is calm." Some informants pointed out how tiresome it would be to live on a single island with no place to go; one man elaborated, "When I get a tired feeling, I take my canoe and sail on the lagoon. Later I return and feel good again. I would not be able to do that at Kili." Others, thinking of the profits to be made from copra at Kili, answered him, "If we go to Kili, we lose our canoes, but it's a good way to lose our canoes, to have instead plenty to eat and much money. Why, the canoes, forget about them." Many spoke of the advantage possessed by Kili in that no people lived there in contrast with Ujae and Wotho.

Although the writer had no time to interview every villager in order to produce a quantitative analysis of their prejudices, certain general impressions were established. Women appeared to be willing to leave to their men the decision about moving, although when pressed to answer for themselves they tended to favor Kili. This was understandable since women would not be as concerned as men about problems of reef and canoe, but they thought longingly about the richness of Kili's plant resources. As a group, young men seemed to favor Kili, for they realized the possibilities of financial well-being from the production of copra. Because of their experience with foreigners at Kwajalein, they knew of the power that accompanied wealth, which they had not enjoyed at Rongerik nor even at Bikini. However, they complained in private that their opinions were ignored by the older alab who composed the Council. Here then was a segment of the community whose position was not represented in deliberations

between the Council and the Administration. As for the alab, most of them older men, an ambivalence of attitude was noted by the writer. Some of them were so undecided that they shifted their preference for Ujae or Kili from hour to hour. As a group, the Council appeared to reflect a greater concern about the Kili reef, but at the same time they wished to preserve the autonomous character of the Bikinian community and therefore preferred an uninhabited site.

In a meeting of the Council which Lieutenant Watson called on Thursday for final discussion of alternative locations, the alab voted unanimously to move to Kili Island. Watson received their decision, and indicated that he would inform the Governor of their action. Two days later, on February 7, a week of surprises was climaxed by the arrival of the Governor himself. A hurried conference with Watson and the writer brought Captain Vest abreast of developments on Rongerik, whereupon he proposed a plan to remove the islanders within the month to a temporary camp on Kwajalein, pending a final decision about resettlement after further investigation of Kili. During the interim, at Rongerik and later at Kwajalein, the community would be completely subsidized by Civil Administration, with opportunity provided for wage employment at the air base for those who desired it. The Governor's proposal was a practical solution to a difficult situation. The writer advised that the proposed sojourn at Kwajalein be as brief as possible in order to avoid the possibly disruptive effects of intensive exposure of relatively unsophisticated Bikinians to the influences of more acculturated Marshallese and Americans at the base.

Captain Vest then presented his plan to the islanders who assembled in and around the open-sided town hall. They enthusiastically expressed their approval. Even as the Governor spoke, the Island Trading Company vessel hove into view on the far side of the lagoon, symbolic of the Administration's promise to see the Bikinians through the final stages of their resettlement. Shortly afterward, a month's supply of food began to be ferried ashore from the ship.

All administrative personnel, and the writer and his interpreter, returned that afternoon to Kwajalein. Next morning the writer was assigned space on a naval air transport plane to Honolulu, where he made a verbal report to Admiral Ramsey, and later submitted a detailed written report with his findings and recommendations (1948). The latter are summarized below.

(1) In the two years on Rongerik, Bikinians had become increasingly impoverished owing to a decline of local food resources. In their failure to make a successful adjustment, there was no evidence of neglect, malingering, or faulty administration on their part.

(2) Removal from Rongerik Atoll was advocated as soon as feasible.

(3) Kili Island was indicated as the most likely site for resettlement, although further investigation was recommended in view of a relative lack of firsthand knowledge by Bikinians about conditions at Kili. The lack of a lagoon was believed to be a not insuperable barrier to successful settlement.

(4) Should Kili be found satisfactory and Bikinians be resettled there, guidance in the techniques of living in a strange environment

should be provided for a period of at least 6 months. Such instruction could best be supplied by a Marshallese with intelligence, leadership, and a practical knowledge of the resources common to the southern Marshall Islands.

had transported them from Kwajalein. Although the exact composition of the party is not known, the writer was later informed by Captain Vest that it was a "cross-section of family and age groups." Most likely it included all or most of the alab. For two weeks the men remained on Kili, supplied with axes, hatchets, food rations, and water, in order to become more intimately acquainted with the handicaps and potentialities of the island. Upon their return to Kwajalein the men were told to recount their experiences to the rest of the community.

May 25 was named as the date when Bikinians would express their individual preference for either Wotho or Kili. However, the day before the scheduled event, a delegation of islanders approached the Civil Administrator to ask that the plebiscite be postponed. They were unable to make up their minds. Accordingly the date was extended to June 1. Commander Ferguson, thinking to aid them in their dilemma, had large aerial photographs of Wotho and Kili posted on a bulletin board in the camp, with accompanying descriptions in Marshallese of the pros and cons of each site. Several times during the following week, small groups and individual Bikinians sought advice from administrative officials and other Marshallese. Most of the Bikinians hoped that the Administration would eventually make the decision for them.

About that time, an Associated Press newsman interviewed Bikinians about their reactions to Kwajalein and their future plans. They were reported as unimpressed by the novelty of the air base, and anxious to resume life in a more normal Marshallese environment.

Bikini still loomed large in their thoughts, and they continued to hope for return to that atoll. According to a statement allegedly made by Juda, Bikinians "want to live on a big island of our own. It must have plenty of coconuts, plenty of water and fish, and no other people" (HA May 23, 1948).

On June 1 the plebiscite was finally held. In a small room were placed two boxes, labeled WOTHO and KILI, each bearing a photograph and description of the appropriate site. Every Bikinian, male and female, 20 years and older, was given a metal tag and directed to enter the room alone, drop the token into one box or the other according to his choice, and leave the room. An official count of the results revealed a distinct preference for Kili: 54 to 22. Although it was impossible to know who voted against Kili, the writer is of the opinion, based on subsequent interviews with Bikinians, that most of the men who had actually been on Kili (probably most or all of the alab) voted for Wotho in objection to the difficulties associated with the Kili reef. The writer had earlier found at Rongerik that women and young men generally favored Kili Island. The results of the secret ballot were forwarded to Admiral Ramsey in Pearl Harbor, who had by then been named High Commissioner. However, Captain Vest apparently was not yet ready to make a firm recommendation to his superiors about removal of the group to Kili, for he continued his investigation of the reported disadvantages of the island.

CHAPTER X

PHASE IV: KILI

Final resettlement of the Bikinians was attended by comparatively little publicity. Their experiences on Kili Island since 1948, though often as critical as those described above, tended to be reported only among the Marshallese people and American officials in the area. Other events in the Marshalls and in other parts of the Trust Territory crowded news of the Bikinians and their adjustment in a strange environment off the pages of the American press. Therefore, the following account of their activities on Kili is based almost entirely on official records and the writer's own observations during a brief survey on Kili in August 1949.

Resettlement at Kili

In the implementation of Captain Vest's plan, as approved by the High Commissioner, two naval vessels (AG-140 and LCT-1238) departed from Kwajalein on September 22, 1948. They carried a working party of 8 enlisted men from Civil Administration and 24 Bikinians under the command of Lieutenant (junior grade) Daniel J. Diana, U. S. N. Stowed on board were 300 tons of construction materials for the new village to be built at Kili. Since Watson had been assigned to duty elsewhere, Diana, who was a member of the Civil Administration staff at Majuro Atoll in the southern Marshalls sub-district, was placed in charge of the resettlement project. On October 1, 1948, the civil commands at Majuro and Kwajalein were

merged under Commander Ferguson as Civil Administrator of the Marshalls with headquarters at Majuro (Majuro Civ. Adm. Report, 3d quarter, 1948).

The first stop of the working party was at Ailinglablab Atoll, halfway to Kili, where 10 Marshallese laborers were recruited to aid in unloading the vessels at Kili. At dawn on September 25, the two ships arrived at their destination, and work was immediately begun in ferrying the cargo ashore. It had been planned to beach the LCT on the reef in order to facilitate this operation, but after three unsuccessful attempts the plan had to be abandoned. During the next 12 days, at the rate of 25 tons per day, cargo was transferred to shore in small lots, each of which had to be loaded on a wooden platform built atop a rubber raft. This colossal undertaking was accomplished with the loss of only 25 sacks of cement. On October 6, the empty vessels departed from Kili with half of the enlisted personnel and all 10 of the laborers from Ailinglablab Atoll.

During the next month the working party set up 33 tent units, each with wooden floor and frame, and constructed 2 concrete cisterns with a capacity of over 5,000 gallons apiece, 2 large latrines near the beach, and 4 permanent buildings intended to serve as trade store, dispensary, copra warehouse, and town hall. On the morning of November 2, the LST-803 and the LCI-1054 arrived off the island bearing the entire community of 184 Bikinians from Kwajalein. Lieutenant Diana directed the unloading of passengers, their belongings, and food supplies. The weather that day was wet and the sea was rough. Difficulties were encountered early in crossing the reef that before long brought the operation to a premature halt. Some islanders

succeeded in gaining the shore, but the rest had to be returned to the ships, which proceeded to Jaluit Atoll where, in the shelter afforded within the lagoon, a break in the weather was awaited. During the next day or two, all remaining cargo and passengers were concentrated aboard the LCI; the LST returned to base. On November 5, the weather clearing slightly, the LCI made a dash for Kili where unloading was completed as quickly as possible. Two outrigger canoes that had been brought from Kwajalein had to be left at Jaluit due to the lack of beaching facility on Kili. On November 11, Lieutenant Diana and all naval personnel returned to Kwajalein, except one carpenter's mate, Chief William W. Spinden, who remained on Kili to supervise construction of permanent housing.

The rest of November and throughout December, Bikinians worked energetically under Spinden's direction, completing another cistern and 16 housing units, each of the latter possessing a raised floor about 16 by 20 feet in area, walls of board construction, and a tarpaper covered roof. At first all of the islanders had been sheltered in tents erected by the working party. As individual housing was completed, tent shelters were abandoned, and families moved into their new quarters. Ten Bikinians with previous experience in woodworking did all of the carpentry work under Spinden's guidance. Others contributed to the common effort under direction of the Council. Some removed brush from the village area as construction progressed, others cleared the paths that had been in use by prowar inhabitants for communication with other parts of the island. Sand and gravel were transported from the beaches in order to cover the streets and

the area about each dwelling. Coconuts were collected from the plantations to supplement the food rations provided by the Administration. Fishing was attempted, and tuna and other fish were caught whenever weather conditions permitted.

Lieutenant Diana returned with a field trip on January 20, 1949, and inspected the work. He reported that Bikinians appeared to regard the move to Kili in a favorable light, although minor objections were raised by some older men about the lack of a lagoon. The younger men, he noted, seemed to be less concerned, and demonstrated well the new skills they had acquired in handling small craft in heavy surf (Majuro Civ. Adm. Report, 4th quarter, 1948). Island Trading Company delivered its first consignment of trade goods to the people at Kili on February 26, 1949. Food stores were sorely needed since some of those that had been provided in November by the Administration had been damaged in unloading, and the remainder had barely been sufficient to carry the community since that time. Civil Administration had terminated all gratuitous issue of food supplies for Bikinians, on the basis that settlement on Kili should enable them to become self-sufficient. Arrangements were made, however, for emergency air drops should heavy seas isolate the group for any extended period. A set of simple signals was devised by which planes passing overhead could be informed of the need for food, medical supplies, and other emergency issues.

Work continued in the village after Lieutenant Diana's departure with the January field trip. Another cistern, the fourth, was completed, and 16 more housing units were erected, providing 32 in all. Houses were painted and rain gutters attached to roofs with

connections to nearby cisterns for maximum catchment of rainwater. After January, a major effort was initiated to clear the coconut plantation nearest the village in order that copra could be made in anticipation of the next field trip. Copra dryers had to be devised when wet weather interfered with processing the coconut by the sun-drying technique known to Bikinians. The last building to be constructed was the church, the only thatched structure in the village. It was located on the crest of a small hill just back of the houses, where its concrete floor had once served as the base of a Japanese plantation building. Chief Spinden, his work finished, departed from Kili on May 9, 1949. From that time, Bikinians were left to their own devices to make the best possible adjustment to their new island home.

Resources of the Island

Kili Island is a kind of satellite of Jaluit Atoll which lies about 35 miles to the northeast. According to legend, both Kili and Jaluit were conquered and brought under the rule of paramount chief Kaibuke (see Figure 22 for his family genealogy) in the mid-nineteenth century (Kramer and Neevermann 1938:29). Kili first gained the attention of the Western world when it was discovered in 1797. It was named Hunter's Island, but the reference has rarely been used in the literature. Shortly after Kabua succeeded Kaibuke, who was his maternal uncle, a devastating hurricane struck the southern atolls in November 1874 (Mager 1886:44). Kili's surviving inhabitants abandoned the island, and established residence on Jaluit.

The deserted island of Kili, together with the three Jaluit islands of Jevet, Jar, and Bokelablab, were purchased in the seventies from Kabua by the trader Adolph Capelle and his partners. Within a few years, owing to financial reverses suffered by Capelle and Company, the four islands were transferred to the Deutsche Handels-und-Plantagengesellschaft, a Hamburg firm with its Marshalls' headquarters at Jaluit. Finally in 1887 the property was acquired by the great Jaluit Gesellschaft which had been formed that year by the merging of the principal trading firms in the Marshalls (information received by the writer from descendants of Adolph Capelle at Likiep Atoll in 1946).

The Germans developed Kili as a commercial coconut plantation, with a single German planter in charge of 25 to 30 Marshallese laborers who were recruited from Jaluit on a contract basis. By 1892, an area of 12 hectares (29.65 acres) had been cleared and planted from an estimated cultivable area of 60 hectares (146.26 acres). Within 12 to 15 years the annual yield was expected to be 75 tons of copra. The yield in 1891 was only 12,896 pounds, or little more than 6 short tons (Brandeis 1892:332-36). About 1908, Kili Island was purchased on the installment plan from the Jaluit company by an independent planter, Otto Bock. At that time, according to Marshallese informants, about a third of the island was planted in coconut. Bock is said to have completed planting of the island by 1914, after which all Germans were removed from the islands by the Japanese. The three islands at Jaluit remained with the Jaluit Gesellschaft until 1914.

Early in the history of Japanese administration of the Marshalls, the powerful concern Nanyo Boeki Kaisha assumed control of the old